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Foreword

About the Title

The book was already finished, but I still had doubts how to entitle it. At first I thought about “The Most Controversial Sicilian.” It seemed a proper name for a repertoire, based on the Sveshnikov. Indeed, for only 30 years, this brainchild of several players from Chelyabinsk has passed through the phases of total denial, angry attempts of refuting this defiance to the classical laws of positional chess, suspicious acceptance, to be finally adopted by most leading grandmasters as Kasparov, Topalov, Kramnik, Leko, Khalifman, to name a few.

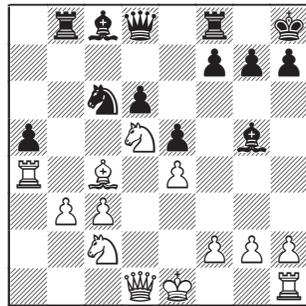
Then a series of internet blitz games struck me with another characteristic feature of the modern Sveshnikov.

I realised how easy it was to include it in one’s repertoire!

Most of my games reached in seconds the position on the following diagram.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♗xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 e5 6 ♗db5 d6 7 ♙g5 a6 8 ♗a3 b5 9 ♗d5 ♙e7 10 ♙xf6 ♙xf6

11 c3 ♙g5 12 ♗c2 0-0 13 a4 bxa4 14 ♙xa4 a5 15 ♙c4 ♙b8 16 b3 ♗h8



We are already in the middle-game, but independent play is still far ahead. Furthermore, Black’s plan is obvious. He wants to push f5 right away or after ...g6 in case White plays 17 ♗e3. Strategically, the Sveshnikov is a rather simple opening. You read part 3 and 4, leaf through the “Quick Repertoire” chapters of the other parts of the book, and you are ready to test a whole new Sicilian!

The so-called Positional variation against the Sveshnikov has become lately the first choice of White

players of all levels. A quick check in my database shows that in 2006-2008 it occurred two times more often than the lines with 9 ♗xf6. Apparently fashion, but also fear of the sharper variations, have a strong impact on White's preferences. Otherwise it is difficult to explain this fondness of a line which is too well explored, aspires to a small positional edge at best, and is often rather boring. Of course Anand or Shirov may have every reason to like it, provided it brings them full points sometimes, but they have super technique and deep analyses of the arising positions and even endgames. The lower the level, the worse are White's statistics. Below 2400, first players scored only about 50 percent in the last two years.

Currently I do not see any serious theoretical problems for Black.

I worked hard to neutralise two fresh ideas of Khalifman and Anand, and hope that our improvements will withstand practical test. I show that Black's bishop pair is a fair match to the "magical" control of the centre, that attracts so many white players. Most importantly, I propose an ambitious repertoire, where White must take considerable risks if he wants to aspire even to the slightest advantage. My aim was not so much to offer a survival guide for Black, but rather pick out variations that lead to rich and double-edged play, with decent winning chances for him. I rejected from the repertoire all the lines where Black

would be playing for only two results. For instance, in the Positional variation I recommend 11...0-0, while 11...♗g5, followed by 12...♗e7, is left for a backup line.

I follow the same approach after 1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 ♗c6 3 ♗b5. White often tries to kill any life in the position, hoping to squeeze us without any risk thanks to his flexible pawn formation. I devoted 36 pages to advocate 3...♗f6! in this popular system. You will find important new plans, developed by me or Nedev, which bring about double-edged unbalanced play. The fine point of this provocative move is that White must pick up the gauntlet and push e5 at some moment, or he should forget about opening advantage. After e5, however, Black obtains clear counterplay. In some lines he can even castle long.

About the Authorship

I have been analysing the Sveshnikov for years with my friend GM Vasil Spasov. It is his main repertoire as Black, while I was more interested for the White side. Gradually I discovered that Black was in perfect shape and I started playing it for both colours. When I finished working on "The Sharpest Sicilian", I decided to go on with this series and write about the Sveshnikov. As a coach of the Bulgarian women's team, I had enough experience with explaining the most topical lines of that system. Still, I felt that I needed an outside critical view on my analyses. Thus I contacted GM

Nedev, who is one of the most devoted protagonist of the Sveshnikov and has ample practical experience. We went together through all my files to synchronise our assessments. During the last year, we had to repair some variations in the Rossolimo, (3 ♘b5) analyse the new ideas, developed by Khalifman, and fight the sneaky novelty of Anand against Shirov in Linares 2008. We also dropped some lines of the Novosibirsk variation, which turned to be unfit for playing for win.

The result is a repertoire book for Black which deals with positions arising after 1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 ♗c6. It covers the Rossolimo (1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 ♗c6 3 ♘b5) and the Sveshnikov, (1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 ♗c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 e5) as well as some rare lines after 1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 ♗c6. The wide range of other Anti-Sicilians are beyond the scope of this book.

We have not aimed to offer a historical survey or complete study on the Sveshnikov. We have endeavoured to provide a sound, yet aggressive repertoire, with a focus on the most topical lines.

About the Structure

This book is above all a practical guide, so I have arranged the material in an order of importance. The Rossolimo variation is a frequent guest in tournaments and it is useful to know it even if you are

not a Sveshnikov fan. Then comes the Positional variation, which is the centre of our repertoire. Thus you'll be able to start playing the Sveshnikov even before finishing the book.

The closing Part 13 considers the Novosibirsk variation. (1 e4 c5 2 ♖f3 ♗c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♖xd4 ♗f6 5 ♗c3 e5 6 ♗db5 d6 7 ♙g5 a6 8 ♗a3 b5 9 ♙xf6 gxf6 10 ♖d5 ♙g7) It is a stand-alone system which is outside our repertoire. We included it to provide you with a backup line. You might also want to employ it as a surprise weapon.

The presentation follows the Chess Stars trademark structure, introduced by "The Safest Sicilian". Every system is examined in a separate part which contains three chapters: "Quick Repertoire"; "Step by Step"; "Complete Games".

You start with the "Quick Repertoire". You'll find there all the vital information that you need to start playing the variation. These chapters contain more explanation and try to extract the essence of the numerous variations, analysed branch by branch in the "Step by Step" chapters.

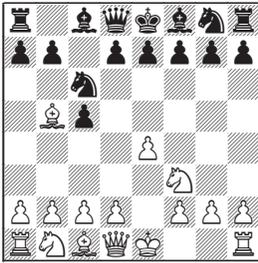
Finally, the "Complete Games" sections give practical examples and sometimes cover backup lines of the main repertoire.

I suppose that players above Elo 1900 will benefit most of this book.

*Atanas Kolev
April 2008*

Part 1

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5



QUICK REPERTOIRE

The most frequent move you are going to face after 2...♘c6, is 3 ♗b5. The lower your opponent's rating is, the higher the probability of getting some Anti-Sicilian with ♗b5. The so-called Rossolimo Variation is often seen nowadays even at highest level. It is a fine choice if White wants to play "on understanding", or simply has not done his homework in the open main lines.

Do not neglect this system in your preparation as it is deceptively innocuous. We often defend this position with both colours and we are well aware of how rich and interesting variation the Rossolimo is.

3...♗f6

3...g6 is a solid alternative, but our choice goes for the text due to several reasons:

1. 3...♗f6 allows to build up a repertoire which is independent of tricky move orders. For instance, if White tries 3 ♘c3, we are happy to answer it with 3...♗f6, not being afraid of 4 ♗b5. Otherwise 3 ♘c3 would have been awkward, since 3...g6 could be met by 4 d4.

2. By attacking the e4-pawn, we

restrict White's choice, because he has not castled yet so he is unable to protect it with ♖e1.

3. Should White attempt to slow torturing us by damaging our pawn chain with 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 followed by 5 d3, we succeed in leading out our light-squared bishop to g4. This is an unexplored plan, which leads to original positions. It has been developed and tested by Kolev and we are going to arm you with our analysis, to ensure you some competitive advantage over your opponents.

4. The 3 ♗b5 adepts usually prefer to avoid sharp opening lines and unbalanced positions. That might make them uncomfortable in the most challenging lines which involve e4-e5.

After our attack on the e4-pawn, as early as on the fourth move, White has to settle for a plan.

- A. 4 d3
- B. 4 ♗xc6
- C. 4 e5
- D. 4 ♖e2
- E. 4 ♘c3